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Armour
Institute of Technology
Library,
Chicago, Ills.

Jacoma.

The City Library

Sept., 1894

“Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries in a thousand years have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom.”

Emerson.

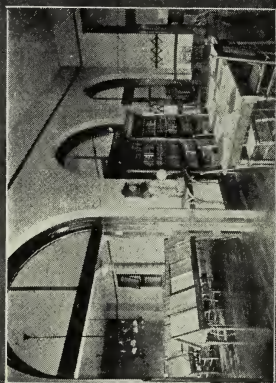
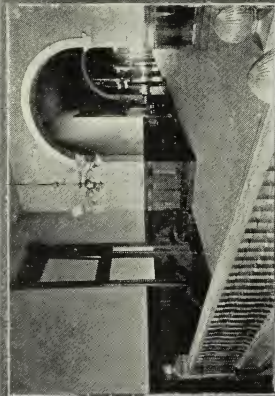
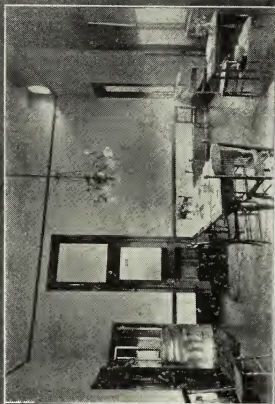
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City Library of Tacoma



THE CITY LIBRARY AND ITS HOME.

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LIBRARY COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL.

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ROYAL A. GOVE, M. D.

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MR. C. H. DOW,
Representing Trades Council,

MR. W. C. WHEELER,
Representing Chamber of Commerce.

MRS. GRACE R. MOORE


LIBRARIAN.

WM. CURTIS TAYLOR.

ASSISTANT.

MISS AMY HALL

The City Library of Tacoma.

N the completion of the present City Hall the city council of Tacoma generously gave to the public library the free use of one-half the upper story, with light, heat and janitor service. The little library, which had been started by private enterprise some few years before, notably by Mrs. Grace R. Moore, the originator, and Walter J. Thompson, a large donor, had occupied four small rooms in the Ball block on C street. There the city had generously aided it with funds. The change to our present elegant and spacious quarters attracted more widely the attention of citizens, who soon became better acquainted with the merits of the undertaking. Although the unparalleled money stringency restrained our purchases, borrowers were increased and our real usefulness was enlarged.

Over 115,000 visits by readers and borrowers have been made to this library since May, 1892.

"Select your authors as you select your friends."

For our best results we must be content to wait for more favored times.

January, 1894, the city received the property and control from the former library company, and a committee of three members of the council was charged with direction. Notwithstanding this arrangement, by a wise provision political influence, as far as possible, is avoided by making the librarian's tenure of office five years and by giving him the appointment of his assistants, to be approved subsequently by council. As a matter of fact, however, our council has always been a unit in its measures for the library. Associated with the council committee is an advisory committee of citizens representing various different interests.

A report of the property and work of the library has been rendered monthly during the present librarian's time, beginning May, 1892. Over 55,000 books have been loaned, from a stock averaging not more than 1600.

NUMBER AND CIRCULATION.

At the present time the books in the circulating department number 2264; in the reference department there are 620; total bound books, 2894. Unbound books, including popular monthly magazines, about 650; total bound and unbound, 3544. The loans in the past twelve months amounted to 27,940, which is fourteen times our average stock of circulating books. The following classification may be made of these loans: religion, science and philosophy, 671; history and travel, 3714; fiction, 16,264; juvenile, 4496; all others, 2795.

No book is worth reading once that is not worth reading twice.

"Wisdom is the principal thing ; therefore get wisdom.

We have constantly on file nineteen newspapers, representing prominent cities of the country, and on our tables in all the rooms fifteen weekly and nine monthly magazines. About 140 persons daily avail themselves of this literature.

RELATIVELY LARGE LOANS.

The surest test of public appreciation is the number of books loaned in proportion to our stock. We have several times recently given out in one day as many as one-fourth of all the circulating books on the shelves, and our loans average fourteen times a year for every book. Of course these figures are relatively far in excess of the circulation of larger libraries in the older cities ; but the conditions are so different that no comparison with them would have any value. Still our large circulation is sufficient evidence of the hunger of this community for better library supplies.

SELECTION OF NEW BOOKS.

It has been the librarian's habit to get from the users of the library lists of such books as they would like to have on the shelves. As the great purpose of a free institution like this is to meet the wants of worthy people of all conditions and all tastes there is no way so good as to make the public a "committee of the whole" on suggestions. This is said concerning individual wishes ; but there are collective wants deserving of even more earnest consideration by library authorities.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND THE SCHOOLS.

In these days the progressive public library holds a very close relation to the schools. For nearly two years we have

Seattle has a fine public library ; but like our own it needs a support that shall keep pace with it. We combine to this end.

*Use your influence and sign for the better raising of funds.
It means many thousands of books in a short time.*

endeavored, with limited means, to carry duplicates of the list of books asked for by the superintendent of education as supplemental to the public school text books. (See report of the Tacoma city schools, 1892-'93, p. 103.)

As our means enlarge it will be our purpose to be far more effective here on lines that will suggest themselves as the work proceeds.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS.

The labor organizations have a just claim to ample recognition in the selection of our literature. We find among them thoughtful readers, disposed to look for themselves into history and economic facts and their bearings on the relations of society. The ability to do this justly is of the highest importance. The Trades Council of Tacoma has been prompt to see the advantages offered by us and is active in this interest; and its appointment of its president on our advisory committee is a fitting recognition of these inter-relations.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND LITERARY AND ART CLUBS.

Tacoma is very rich in societies for the cultivation of literature and art. They are constantly in need of both circulating and reference books. Hitherto we have been able only scantily to meet this want.

More ought to be said on these lines, but it is enough to add that our proper place will not be reached until tradesman and teacher, mechanic and agriculturist, editor and

Get together such books as you can spare and send us word to collect them.

Don't expect outsiders to believe in our city unless we believe in its public library.

public speaker, and the school pupil from the oldest to the youngest shall think of the city library when they need information or inspiration. Even now, much as we lack, an application to the librarian will bring out more from the heart of our books than appears on their face. Let no one hesitate to ask questions. It makes the librarian better acquainted with the contents of his books and that is what he likes.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.

In this hurrying age and country not all the children remain at school long enough to be well equipped for their life work; and yet they are all to help in shaping our American society and institutions. For these future citizens and citizenesses nothing can take the place of the free library. We have a long table supplied with magazines and a closely filled case of books—all too few—specially for them. Young Lincoln and Garfield, by their cabin fires poring over their one or two books, are inspiring representatives; but the public library does better for its young people than that. Our returning books might speak of many a bright home scene, but they could also tell of unsympathetic atmospheres wherein themselves and eager young faces bent over them were the only things hopeful. If we look for inspiring facts on this line we shall find plenty of them. As a specimen we know of an elevator boy who keeps fastened up in his monotonous cage one of our books—always a classic—which he peruses between “lifts.” Bright boy

The library tax will set us on our feet handsomely with plenty of books and plenty of hours.

*There is more in our books than is shown by the titles.
Consult the librarian.*

your passengers little think of the young life that is being lifted up the while!

It is no mean responsibility of the management to feed these young minds so wholesomely as to build up while entertaining, with books both attractive and good in a large sense. Thanks to the wealth of modern literature there need not be in the juvenile series a single book on the one hand dry or, on the other, slushy.

ESTABLISHMENT OF BRANCH LIBRARIES.

The modern library is alive to the fact that it has to fill toward the public the double office of instructor and entertainer. Reference has already been made to our efforts to furnish the schools with such reading, outside of their study routine, as the teachers may approve. Many progressive libraries place branches in the prominent schools for the convenience of teachers and pupils. As this would involve a permanent reduction of the stock on our own shelves we could not afford the undertaking at present.

BUT SHALL WE OT BEG I WITH CAUTAUQUA BEACH?

A temporary loan of books in quantity might be made to the intellectual summer colony at Chautauqua Beach. That is composed largely of our readers, and it would be to their interest and ours to furnish such accommodation.

PUBLIC LECTURES TO BE STARTED NEXT WINTER.

Either in our rooms or in a more central place it is intended later in the year to commence a series of lectures

The librarian doesn't know about everything; but he wants to.

Visitors to the Interstate Fair will have a cordial reception at our rooms.

on historical, literary and industrial subjects by speakers of reputation, some of whom have already been engaged. We have only been deterred by scarcity of funds from prosecuting this purpose long ago.

OUR SYSTEM OF OPEN SHELVES.

Until a comparatively recent time it was thought by many librarians that the certainty of misplacement and the danger of something not so innocent made it out of the question to have first class library management if the public had access to the shelves. But this subject was very fully discussed at the convention of librarians in Chicago last year, and the weight of opinion seemed to favor free handling of the books by the people. This has always been the rule here. It is, indeed, not without serious objections ; but it is more democratic and the disposition in a people's free library should be to consult the convenience of the people rather than the ideal orderliness which would delight the librarian. This does not mean, however, that a disorder is to be allowed which would embarrass the people themselves by the utter displacement of the books.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE LIBRARY.

By the enabling act of the state of Washington it is contemplated that public libraries shall get their support from a proportion of the fines and licenses paid to the city. By a recent ordinance this library receives five per cent. of

Newspaper Reading Room open early and late every day in the week.

Library hours at present, from 10 A. M. till 5 P. M. Also Saturday evenings from 7 till 9. Newspaper room open early and late.

the revenue so obtained. A few of the objections to this plan might be here stated :

First.—The fund is uncertain, and hence unfavorable to making the best contracts for supplies.

Second.—It does not keep pace with the growth of the city in productive businesses and in settled home population.

Third.—It relieves from taxation about one-third of the owners of city property—the non-resident investors—who get the benefit of all that a public library means to the prosperity of a city without helping to pay for it.

A small library tax on the assessable property of the city would secure to us at all times a good working income.

Nobody would feel such a tax, but it would even now give us thousands of new books every year ; and in five years we should have a large library:

Long public hours would follow at the earliest time possible.

The public library of Seattle, and probably that of Spokane, also needing more funds, will join us in petitioning the next legislature to authorize cities of the first class to levy a library tax instead of the present method of support. Many of our citizens, large tax-payers as well as small, have signed petitions for this improvement. The reader is invited to append his name to the petition now at the library. Many

“ Wisdom cannot be gotten for gold ; neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.”

Reading needs to be wholesome as well as eating. Deserts have doubtless a good place, but the library wants to be more than a pastry shop.

advantages not necessary to be specified here will follow the success of this movement.

Montana allows a library tax of one mill ; and the little town of Helena, having only 14,000 population, with half a mill tax maintains in fine shape a growing library of 13,000 volumes.

Indiana permits a two mill tax.

THE LATE DONATION RECEPTION.

A pleasant reception was held in the rooms of the library on the evening of the 2d of July, at which nearly 300 books were given by the participants. The occasion was enlivened by music and speeches ; and in every way this gathering of 500 of the library's best friends was a complete success.

BUT DONATIONS ARE ALWAYS IN ORDER.

Do not wait for public opportunities. Donations of books and old numbers of magazines are solicited. The donor need take no further trouble than to get together his books and send notice to the librarian, who will attend to their collection.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

The thanks of the library are due to the city council which, besides furnishing it with a spacious and attractive home, has with a perfect unanimity, otherwise done for it

In the munificent quarters assigned to us by the city we can accommodate 50,000 books and have reading room left. We shall have them before many years.

A word from Spokane just received shows it to be in line with the direct library tax movement.

what seemed best. Also to the press of Tacoma, without exception, for providing us with free copies of their publications and opening their columns to all our notices and reports. In general we are grateful to various organizations and private individuals for encouragement by gift and otherwise.

The illustration page—a reduction from a large photograph taken by the writer—is the generous contribution of the Commercial Engraving Co., of Tacoma, and was prepared especially for this pamphlet.

HOW OUR BOOKS ARE ARRANGED.

Finding lists are furnished on application at the desk ; but as the arrangement is according to author or subject an easy way to look up a desired book is to consult the shelves first. The fiction is on the right as one enters the library, and the general literature on the left.

In the case of the fiction, each work is prominently marked in large type with initial of its author's *real* name ; and the books are shelved in alphabetical order from A to Z. Thus Clemens (Mark Twain), will be found near Collins, and so on. Letters so used, with distinguishing figures annexed, form a mode of shelving known as the Cutter plan.

The general works, on the other side of the room, are arranged by the Dewey decimal system, the main features of which are as follows :

Under the present income we hope to add 1,000 books a year to our shelves. The proposed source would give us four or five times that number.

A little care about returning books on time would both save fines to the borrower and the librarian's time in keeping a multitude of little accounts.

All subjects on which books can possibly be written are divided into nine classes. Publications covering the whole field of thought, as magazines, dictionaries, etc., being assignable to no one of these classes, are marked zero, making a tenth division. Thus we have: 0, General Works; 1, Philosophy; 2, Religion; 3, Sociology; 4, Language Study; 5, Science; 6, Useful Arts; 7, Fine Arts; 8, Literature, as poetry, the drama, essays, etc.; 9, History. Each of these is again divided into ten heads. Thus we have 100 divisions, formed by adding appropriate figures to each of the original ten. The reader will not be carried into further niceties of subdivision belonging to this system, as we design here only to guide in a general way to its use.

It is a convenience peculiar to our library to have these 100 divisions plainly printed in large type on the front of the books.

Walk around with us.

Do you want a work on any live *social* subject? Look over the 30's (Sociology). The 32's will talk about Woman Suffrage; the 33's about the Labor Question and the Tariff; and so on with the rest.

Or, do you seek something in Science? See here among the 50's. Here is Astronomy, 52; Geology, 55. You will soon be able to pick them out for yourself.

The method of becoming entitled to borrow books is very simple. Get a blank at the librarian's table and learn the requirements.

An old public library in the far west, with ten times our number of books, did not loan last year so many as we, by 2,300. Their books go out little oftener than once a year each. Ours fourteen times.

Did you say you wanted history? Well that has a good many branches ; but there is a relation in their numbers which you will soon learn. They are all among the 90's. Included in this subject are Descriptions of places, i. e., Travels. All the books marked 91 are Travels. After a while you will learn what particular places the next figures in the lower line refer to. Biography is a part of History. All the 92's are biographies. Of History, pure and simple, after the first 90, which is General, we have 93, Ancient; 94, some part of Europe ; 95, Asia ; etc., etc.

With the assistance the librarian is always glad to furnish, a little care in the use of these figures will make even our few shelves—since they are free and open—a great indexed treasury to the average seeker after information.

These two systems of classification—the Dewey for general works and the Cutter for fiction—are used by nearly all the new, progressive libraries the country over. Some of the old and large ones adopted the reform ; and probably nothing but the great expense of a change deters others. The Dewey system especially marks the greatest improvement ever made in library classification.

WHERE THE TIME GOES IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY.

In the months of July and August 320 books were added to the library. In addition to keeping up with current work, this small number required more than 4,000

It saves trouble and money to begin right what is to endure and grow. Work shaped towards a good end is prophetic of the end.

Diodorus says that over the entrance to the Alexandrian Library was this inscription :

"THE MEDICINE OF THE SOUL."

entries and processes, to classify and prepare for easy reference and identification. To the unpractised this may seem excessive. It was once remarked to the writer that he had not books enough to warrant so much classification. As well might one have said to the first builders of Tacoma : "Set your houses down anywhere ; you have not enough to warrant regulated streets and numbering."

We have over 1000 regular borrowers. Besides being served, their accounts have to be kept straight, and track must be kept of all the books out. The newspaper files and the book shelves need constant care to preserve their order. Librarians *ought* also to know a good deal of the contents of their books ; but those are the exception who, after their in-doors and out-doors work is done have more time left than to "skim."

WM. CURTIS TAYLOR,

Tacoma, Sept., 1894.

Librarian.

We want good books and new books; but don't let us forget that the good are not necessarily new, and the new are not necessarily good.



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